

Washington D.C. - Rep. Linda Sánchez (D-CA) testified today before a Judiciary Subcommittee hearing on her bill, H.R. 1966, the “Megan Meier Cyberbullying Prevention Act,” which would create a new federal law to give prosecutors the ability to punish those who use electronic means to engage in severe cyberbullying -- defined as repeated, hostile, and severe communication made with an intent to harm.

“Today’s kids are so wired into their electronic social networks that they type more messages than they speak each day,” said Rep. Linda Sánchez. “Their virtual world is more real to them than the so-called real world.”

The legislation is named after Megan Meier, a 13-year old girl who hung herself after being cyberbullied relentlessly by who she thought was a boy named Josh. Megan’s family would later learn that “Josh” was Lori Drew, 49, who had posed as a teenage boy to harass and torment Megan. Lori Drew was never brought to justice due to the absence of a law defining this type of bullying as a crime.

“I believe that we can protect our right to free speech and victims of cyberbullying at the same time,” continued Sánchez. “I want the law to be able to distinguish between an annoying chain email, a righteously angry political blog post, or a miffed text to an ex-boyfriend - all of which are and should remain legal; and serious, repeated, and hostile communications made with the intent to harm. When the latter rises to a criminal level, as it did in the case of Lori Drew, prosecutors should have a tool at their disposal to allow them to punish the perpetrator.”

Rep. Linda Sánchez also mentioned Hail Ketchum-Wiggins’ case, a 17-year old girl who was cyberbullied at her high school near Sánchez’ Congressional District in Southern California. Three varsity athletes posted a video on Facebook in which they described how and where they would rape Hail before disclosing the manner in which they would kill her. You can see the students’ tormenting video [here](#):

“While Missouri and many other states have enacted cyberbullying statutes, the children of other states are waiting for Congress to act,” said Rep. Sánchez.

Today’s hearing by Subcommittee on Crime, Terrorism, and Homeland Security is the first step in the legislative process, where committee members hear witnesses representing various viewpoints on the measure. The Megan Meier Cyberbullying Prevention Act, which currently has 17 bipartisan co-sponsors, will now await to be considered in a “mark-up” session where committee members will vote on amendments to the bill.

To view Rep. Sánchez’ testimony, visit her [YouTube page](#)